(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to fill the gap and to compete with the other countries in future?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The Indian Army has drawn up plans for phased modernization of its artillery. A number of modernization schemes are being pursued with respect to induction of state of art weapon systems, ammunitions, surveillance system and support equipment of ensure that modernization of field artillery keep pace with technological advancements and opertional requirements.

Army cantonment at Bilaspur

†2468. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a decision has been taken to construct an army cantonment in Bilaspur;

(b) if so, the status of action in this regard;

(c) the area of land that would be required for its establishment; and

(d) the details of the progress in its establishment?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) No decision has been taken by the Ministry of Defence to set up a cantonment in Bilaspur.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Operators against ULFA by army

†2469. SHRI VINAY KATIYAR:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a special operation is being launched against ULFA in Assam, by the army;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of militants killed and arrested under this operation, and the quantity of explosive material seized from them;

(d) whether it is a fact that ULFA militants are getting aid from other countries;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the details of steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Since January 1997, a Unified Headquarter has been functioning in Assam to coordinate the Counter Insurgency Operations of the Army, Central Police Forces and State Police against the militant outfits including United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). During the current year, (upto the 13th March 2007), 33 ULFA cadres have been killed in encounters and 114 arrested. Security Forces have also recovered 42 weapons including 9 AK series rifles, 56 grenades, 3 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and 18 Kilograms of explosive material.

(d) and (e) Inputs received from intelligence agencies and media reports indicate that many insurgent groups are seeking shelter in some of the neighbouring countries.

(f) The issue has been regularly taken up with neighbouring countries through diplomatic bilateral institutional mechanisms.

Problems in HAL

2470. DR. K. MALAISAMY:
SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that HAL is declaring highest dividend of 166 per cent, after liquidating the entire Government loan, and running without Budgetary support, but there are several defects in the area of its administration, finance, legal and technical, if so, the details including the weak areas;

(b) who are the major customers of HAL; and